

VZCZCXRO8484

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DE RUEHYD #0521 1540641  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
P 020641Z JUN 08  
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8905  
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE 0155

UNCLAS YAOUNDE 000521

SIPDIS  
SENSITIVE

DEPT ALSO FOR AF/C  
DEPT ALSO FOR HR/OE  
PARIS AND LONDON FOR AFRICA WATCHERS

E.O. 12958: n/a  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [ECON](#) [EAGR](#) [ASEC](#) [CM](#)  
SUBJECT: Snapshot of Douala Post-Riots

¶1. (U) Summary: Douala -- Cameroon's business capital, largest city, and hotbed of the opposition -- remains calm following riots in February and a constitutional amendment in April. However, there is rising frustration about the price of food. End summary.

¶2. (U) Douala has remained calm in the aftermath of February riots and the April vote to amend the constitution. Over the past few months, government authorities anticipated protests in the city, and deployed army troops on the streets. Rapid intervention battalion troops (known under the French acronym, B.I.R.) remain on patrol in various neighborhoods as a deterrent. Sources have reported sporadic identification checks conducted by police and gendarmes but the level of tension among the public has subsided. There has been no attempt to defy the Littoral Province Governor's ban on political protests.

¶3. (U) Nevertheless, there is widespread frustration in Douala that recent government measures have not had the anticipated impact in reducing food prices, which have continued to rise. One well-informed media source told Douala-based Commercial LES that people in the city are very pessimistic about the government's ability or willingness to improve economic conditions. The source expressed a concern that if prices continue to rise, a minor social spark, such as a motorbike cab protest, could fuel further civil unrest.

¶4. (SBU) Douala sources indicate that security forces are growing impatient. In some areas during the February riots, gendarmes were reportedly disarmed and whipped. The continued presence of army troops in Douala and Yaounde had reportedly put significant stress on the security services. As of early May, B.I.R. troops have been quartered to barracks.

¶5. (U) Comment: Douala has traditionally been a hotbed for the political opposition. The February riots hit worst in Douala, and the government is particularly cautious about political activity there. A recent gasoline shortage in Douala, for example, caused nervousness throughout the country (although the cause was linked to inventory problems, not politics). National Day on May 20 passed peacefully in Douala but we will continue to monitor this strategically important and potentially volatile city.

GARVEY